

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Introduction: Radical Inspiration in Dark Times

by Neil Meyer



"TODAY COPY" BY DAVE LOEWENSTEIN VIA JUST SEEDS OPEN ACCESS GRAPHICS COLLECTION

The most recent issues of *Radical Teacher* ("Critical DEI," "Dispatches from the Encampments and Beyond" and "Teaching Reproductive Justice") have centered on specific themes that have taken on additional importance in the face of the current Trump administration and its authoritarian actions. During the creation of those issues, we at *RT* have continued to receive individual submissions of impressive quality and contemporary relevance to our audience. We gather those here for issue 132, "Radical Inspiration in Dark Times."

The publishing calendar of an academic journal makes responding to whip-lash news developments and events challenging. The contributions in this issue began at various points in the last two years. They do not directly cite the immediate crisis we find ourselves in; targeted deportations, the weaponization of antisemitism against colleges and universities, the mass deregulation of the U.S. government around the environment and worker's rights, and the dismantling of the social safety net, to name only a few of the most alarming trends of the second Trump administration. Yet the essays, reviews, and poetry gathered here offer critical reflection, action, and inspiration for these uniquely difficult times.

This issue begins with the first article published at *Radical Teacher* to address Large Language Models (LLMs) and their relationship to the classroom. "AI, Ai, and I: Mapping Marxist and Afrofuturist Approaches to Plagiarism and ChatGPT Through Pauline Hopkins" by Len von Morzé analyzes the theft of labor that undergirds recent advances in A.I. writing technology. Von Morzé does this by historicizing A.I. as part of capitalism's long pattern of exploitation and the mystification of the commodity. The outputs produced by LLMs (such as ChatGPT) hide the words and labor stolen to produce that work. Von Morzé develops this analysis with students via an unconventional path—the Pauline Hopkins novel *Of One Blood* (1902) and the recently discovered "plagiarism" that went into its creation. Analyzing Hopkins's use of other texts alongside their own engagement with software like ChatGPT, von Morzé discusses the ethics of plagiarism in the era of A.I. mass theft of intellectual work.

In "Collaborative Course Design: A Contribution Toward a Radical Food Systems Pedagogy" by Michael Classens, Amara Digout, Aden Fisher, Madaleine Frechette, Nadia Gericke and Christina Wong, the authors describe how they brought the radical politics of critical pedagogy to bear on the development of a new course in critical food systems pedagogy called "The Edible Campus." They worked with students to develop the content of the course and used the campus itself to better analyze how imperialism, capitalism, the climate crisis, and other forces shaped and continue to shape the food cultures of the modern world as manifested on campus.

The next essay, "Can There be a Feminist Pedagogy within the e-Learning Industrial Complex?" by Nafisa Nipun Tanjeem and Michael J. Illuzzi, asks important questions about the role of education technology, a role that has grown exponentially in the wake of the pandemic. The authors here first theorize an "e-Learning industrial

complex," a network of private interests and college leaders that use the rhetoric of access and affordability to dismantle the intellectual, political, and material ties of college campuses by outsourcing coursework and technological control to private e-Learning corporations. The authors describe how their own university doubled down on the platform Blackboard and newly remodeled "hyflex" classrooms, while laying-off staff and faculty and letting the physical plant of the school deteriorate, among other failings. This newest phase of the neoliberal university makes more difficult the radical, liberatory politics of feminist pedagogy but, as the authors describe, that pedagogy and its principles are tools to look beyond the atomized classroom to forge intellectual and political connects across institutions and their larger communities and networks. The essay shows some of this resistance work in action on their own campus.

This is followed by Anne Marie E. Butler and Mazey Perry's "Expansive Gender Pedagogy in the Undergraduate Classroom: The Gender and Sexuality Galaxy." Their essay describes the theoretical underpinnings and process of creating the "Gender and Sexuality Worksheet." This document is meant to help students (and others) learn about multiple and intersecting identities and the affirming language used to understand and describe those identities, and gives participants the chance to reflect on their own identities. The authors consider the worksheet as more than a final production, lesson plan, or evaluation tool, and their essay here serves as a theoretical framing of the "Gender and Sexuality Galaxy," as well as a thorough narrative of its creation with students, for students. It is a model of theory and practice in the classroom that speaks to the values of our journal and its readers.

Jake Mattox's "Friday Night Comics in Dark Times" explores the free, online workshop Friday Night Comics (FNC), where artists in the field discuss their own process and then lead participants in opportunities to make their own comic works in real time. These workshops provide creative, open-access, and free learning spaces, which inspires Mattox to think about how the FNC model can inspire us in these "dark times." The author writes that FNC models a learning environment "free of coercion, ones that contribute to a sense of community often lacking in institutional spaces, insist on the centrality of the arts in creating knowledges, and focus on a medium itself that has strong potential for recognizing and countering dangerous narratives that is, for reflection and resistance." As our institutions become more embattled and upper-level administrators sometimes choose capitulation over the principles of academic freedom, this essay offers readers a chance to reimagine the core values of learning outside of the sometimes-compromised institutions where learning take places.

Our final essay is "Protest Pedagogy" by Beatrice Dias, which describes the intellectual process that went into the creation and teaching of an online, asynchronous graduate-level education course called "Social Context of Education." Seeking to use the course to disrupt the racist and capitalist norms that sustain how education often works, the author and her co-instructor brought the

tactics and values of public protest into their construction of the class. Towards the end of her essay, Dias writes of her pedagogy and practice as “rooted in a collective mindset as a protest of individualism, complexity as a protest of the binary, care as a protest of capitalist productivity, and a protest of the western self to pave the way for a liberated self. These concepts bring the ethos of street protests into the classroom, pushing us to question and challenge dominant framings, and create space for more equitable, just, and liberated possibilities in education.”

Trump 2.0 is both a startling expansion of authoritarian impulses and an extension of a long and ugly

tradition within imperial right-wing ideologies. And the interrelationship between protest in the streets and critical engagement in the classroom is one of the tools educators have to push back with. Beyond the eager acquiescence of certain elite institutions in education, finance, and law, we see millions of everyday people protesting in communities both large and small. We thank the writers gathered in this issue for their work and for the inspiration it may provide us in these dark times.

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